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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 THE HAGUE 000133

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TAGS: [PTER](#) [KISL](#) [KIRF](#) [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [NL](#)
SUBJECT: WILDERS FILM UPDATE: PANDITH MEETINGS WITH DUTCH
GOVERNMENT AND CIVIL SOCIETY

REF: A. THE HAGUE 102

- [1](#)B. THE HAGUE 97
- [1](#)C. THE HAGUE 61
- [1](#)D. THE HAGUE 58

Classified By: GLOBAL ISSUES CHIEF SUSAN GARRO FOR REASONS 1.4 (b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary. Dutch government and civil society representatives told EUR Senior Advisor Farah Pandith during her February 7-8 visit to the Netherlands that the Wilders film on the Koran was cause for concern, but that it was important to avoid excessive &hype8 about the film. The Dutch government is actively engaged in the effort to avert violent reactions to the film, while Dutch Muslim community leaders are also reaching out at home and abroad to encourage a calm response to the film. In an interview published February 10, Wilders reiterated his previous statements that the film will be released in March. End Summary.

Dutch Muslims Reach Out to Discourage Violent Reactions

[1](#)2. (C) Sadik Harchaoui, Chair of the think tank FORUM Institute for Multicultural Development, told EUR Senior Advisor for Muslim Engagement Pandith during a February 8 conversation that Dutch Muslim organizations have taken the lead in communicating with leading figures in Muslim countries to urge them not to advocate retaliation against the Dutch or to &foment discord8 in response to the film. He said that Dutch Muslims are patriotic and have written the embassy of Iran and Syria, asking them not to interfere. Harchaoui said that Dutch Muslims had focused their efforts primarily on reaching out to religious leaders, including the Mufti of Egypt, and government officials in Muslim communities worldwide to urge them to be constructive in their statements about the film. They have also contacted media outlets such as al-Jazeera to urge that broadcasters in the Muslim world not exaggerate the importance of the film.

[1](#)3. (C) Harchaoui said that FORUM had been engaged, quietly, in helping to stimulate and guide Dutch Muslim organizations' efforts to speak out constructively on the film. He stressed

that FORUM,s involvement had been deliberately behind the scenes, because it was more effective if its involvement was not publicized. He lamented that despite the efforts of Muslim organizations to reach out to their co-religionists abroad, the mainstream Dutch media continues to report that Dutch Muslims are too silent, and do not speak out against extremist views and threats of violence in response to the film. In reality, Harchaoui said, many Dutch Muslims feel that the Dutch government is not doing enough to support their own efforts.

Dutch Government Also Prepared

14. (C) Saskia Tempelman, an Interior Ministry senior advisor on radicalization, told Pandith that one of the lessons the Dutch government had taken away from the Danish cartoon crisis was that simply reiterating the importance of the value of freedom of speech was not a sufficient response. The Dutch public message would stress that freedom of speech was a core democratic value, she said, but it would also highlight the importance of responsible communication. She added that while the Dutch government would not censor the film in advance of its release, and would not "condemn" the film, it would move swiftly to distance the government from the views expressed. The point that Wilders is not in government, and does not speak for it, would be stressed. Additionally, the government had made clear, at home and abroad, that once the film is released, the appropriate authorities would review the film to determine whether Wilders was subject to prosecution for violation of any Dutch laws related to offensive speech.

15. (C) Tempelman said that one of the greatest obstacles to

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successfully containing extreme reactions to the film may be the Netherlands, own politicians and their harsh rhetoric. She expressed optimism, however, about how young Dutch Muslims would react. The younger generation knows how to communicate; they are technology-savvy and know how to use the media to get their message out. As an example, she mentioned the "Send Wilders a Hug" campaign initiated by the Dutch Moroccan website, marokko.nl, which urges visitors to the site to send Wilders an e-hug. Another internet campaign, Holland Loves Muslims, was launched by a group of young Dutch Muslims who have circulated a petition stating that "Wilders and other Muslim bashers are not running this country," and that Muslim citizens of the Netherlands enjoy living in a democratic society. The site (<http://hollandlovesmuslims.com>) is selling T-shirts with the logo "Holland Loves Muslims" on the front, and Muslims Love Holland" on the back. Tempelman said that if incidents did occur in the Netherlands, they would come from right-wingers and hard-core youth but added that their numbers were small and that she was more afraid of what might come from abroad.

16. (C) Tempelman said that Dutch government is coordinating who in the government should speak publicly, and when, about the film and that they have reached out to European counterparts at the highest levels. Tempelman said that the spokesperson for the Office of the National Counter Terrorism Coordinator had proposed that in addition to engaging key officials in Muslim countries, the Dutch government be prepared to have a fluent Arabic speaker spearhead a public diplomacy campaign in the Muslim world; the intent would be to have a "Muslim face" delivering the Dutch government message that the Wilders film does not represent the views of the Dutch government. She said that there was support for this idea in the interagency contingency planning group, but did not indicate whether the proposal had been adopted for implementation, or whether they had selected the appropriate individual to accomplish it. Tempelman suggested that despite the efforts so far to explain the Dutch government position on the film to Muslim audiences in other countries,

her personal view was that the MFA was not &doing enough8 to avert negative reactions, but did not specify what additional action she would wish to see.

Young Moroccans Advocate Calm Among Community Members

¶17. (U) Youth workers at a Utrecht municipal government-supported youth center &The Future,8 which works primarily with young men of Moroccan background, told Pandith that in the next couple of weeks, the center,s staff would organize an evening discussion of the Wilders film for their members. A panel of specialists, including an imam, would be invited to lead the discussion and to give advice on how members of the Dutch Moroccan community should respond to the film. The activities coordinator said that the basic message would be that the community should &stay calm8 when the film is released. He said the panelists would explain the importance of freedom of expression, and why Wilders is &allowed8 to make such a film in a democratic society. The initiative to organize the discussion evening came from the center,s own primarily young Moroccan staff.

Turkish Imams Spread the Word Against Violence

¶18. (SBU) During a meeting with the Turkish Women,s Association of Hoogvliet (a suburb of Rotterdam) on February 7, the imam of the mosque with which the women,s group is associated told Pandith that he has actively engaged the members of his mosque in discussion of the Wilders film, counseling them to remain calm and avoid &over reacting8 to the film. He said that he and other Turkish imams in the Netherlands associated with the Turkish government sponsored Diyanet were instructed by the Turkish Ministry of Religion to proactively engage their congregations in such discussions. The agenda for the next day,s discussion group

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in the mosque,s community room listed the Wilders film as an agenda item.

¶19. (SBU) Wilders and the film were mentioned only briefly during Pandith,s wide-ranging discussion with members of the Women,s Association. The Association president noted that it was a pity that people like Wilders don,t participate in dialogue groups such as the one her association sponsors to foster intercultural communication between the ethnic Turkish and native Dutch populations in the area. The other members of the group, primarily middle-aged, first-generation immigrant women expressed disdain for Wilders and his views on Islam, but seemed resigned to the fact that he has succeeded in monopolizing the debate on Muslims in the Netherlands. A local, non-Muslim, neighborhood council member who attended the roundtable said that he thought there should be another voice, as an alternative to Wilders, saying that they could live together. Members of the women,s association expressed agreement with this view.

Wilders on Wilders Film

¶10. (U) In an interview published February 10, Wilders said the film will be released in March, that it will be 15 minutes long, and that it will illustrate texts and verses from the Koran with documentary pictures. He said the film, to be called "Fitna," meaning "ordeal" or "testing of faith," was intended to demonstrate that "Islam could cost us our freedom if we do nothing against it." He said the film would end with a picture of the Prophet Mohammed; Wilders said "something would happen" to the picture, but declined to provide details. As he has in other recent interviews, Wilders slammed Christian Democratic Prime Minister Balkenende for his "fearful and cowardly" reaction to the commotion surrounding the film. He also criticized the Liberal Party (VVD), the largest opposition party in

Parliament for not supporting his positions against Islam. Interestingly, Wilders gave Dutch Muslims credit for reacting "in a mature manner" to reports about the film.

¶11. (U) Recent press reports have indicated that Pakistan has stepped up security for the Dutch Embassy and some other European embassies in Islamabad as a precautionary measure in preparation for the release of the film. Security has reportedly also been increased for some high visibility Dutch firms, such as Phillips and ABN AMRO Bank in Islamabad. The MFA reportedly has instructed Dutch embassies to be alert to possible reactions to the film.

Comment

¶12. (C) The views expressed during Pandith's meetings with government and civil society representatives track closely with what we have heard from a range of contacts over the last several weeks. The Dutch government is concerned about reactions to the film, especially in the Middle East, and has prepared a communications strategy distancing itself from the film while affirming its commitment to freedom of expression.

Dutch Muslims are actively engaged in advocating a non-violent response to the film, in the Netherlands and in Muslim countries. Wilders himself appears to be using the commotion around the anticipated release of the film to attack his domestic political adversaries on the right and the left, as well as to focus extensive attention on his anti-Muslim message, which resonates with his own domestic constituency.

Arnall